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EDITORIAL

THE major part of the present issue of THE LIFE is taken up with some of the papers read at THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference held at Spode House in September 1954. Previous conferences had dealt with the major needs of the spiritual life in the present century such as the sense of community and the biblical background. But it was felt that the Christian of today should attempt to face the civilization of the age of science. The scientific and technicological world which dictates so much of the thought and imagination of the present century remains almost entirely cut off from the life which Christ has set in the heart of his Church. There is a great deal of pseudo-science and merely imaginative speculation on the structure of man and of the universe which tends to saturate people's minds with space fiction, pictures of flying saucers, men from other planets and voyages round the sun which have the great pioneers like Edgar Allan Poe far behind in scientific jargon. But behind all this there is the constant and indefatigably serious work of the true scientists dealing with one aspect of the reality which proceeds from the Word of God. It is an urgent necessity that this human occupation should be sanctified and turned to the worship of the triune God; and that means that it should be made liturgical, patient of the fully human worship of the Creator through the Word made flesh. The majority of those present at the Conference were practising scientists as well as practising Christians so that the papers and discussions were informed and valuable. Readers, then, who are not scientifically minded should not be deterred from studying the papers since they should help to provide the beginning of a clue to the problem of linking modern life with the Christian life.

HOLINESS AND THE TIMES*

GABRIEL REIDY, O.F.M.

THE function of the philosopher, or part of it, is to explain in terms of his system, the mysteries of time and space. The function of the scientist, or part of it, is to explore increasingly efficient techniques for manipulating time and space. The function of the theologian is to transmit a reasonable account of revealed religious doctrine and practice to all men, irrespective of time and space. As Karl Adam particularizes it for our own times, the aim of theology is to 'render the spirit of Catholicism intelligible to the contemporary mind'. (*Sidelights*, Sheed & Ward, p. 2.) Sometimes the theologian is distracted, sometimes disquieted by what is happening about him in the schools of the philosophers and in the laboratories of the scientists. Considering the amplitude of his task, it ought not to cause undue surprise if, occasionally, he seems neglectful of spatio-temporal affairs which loom so large in the minds of everybody else. Yet to him also, time and space are amongst the mysteries of human existence, though not what he calls 'entitatively supernatural' mysteries. Consequently he shelves them in order to insist on the greater importance, the larger inclusiveness of the genuinely revealed mysteries of faith. In a practical vein he harps on the need to imitate Christ and progress through self-denial and prayer to a mystical union with God, and in doing this he inevitably inclines towards a wary conservatism, leaning so heavily on what has been tested and proved through centuries of Christian experience, that his hearers are often tempted to regard him as cagily distrustful of everything new—pledged to a sort of professional obscurantism.

His task is certainly no easy one. It should cause no astonishment if, in this general treatment of *Holiness and the Times*, I am content to lay down some of the more radical theological principles which we can and must hold as absolutes, leaving the application and discussion of them to those who are to follow me.

* A paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, 'Science and Sanctity', September 1954.

Our problem is the perennial one of adaptation: in the sphere of expression the problem is one of intelligent translation and enlightened selection amongst the wellnigh innumerable symbols which have been stockpiling for so long, not merely from the accredited sources of revelation but from every other source of human activity, thought and feeling as well. Unavoidably, each generation tends to think of the problem as a new one or at least more urgently presented than ever before. Equally constant, I think, is the division amongst men largely temperamental into those who stand strictly by the *dictum* 'nil innovetur nisi quod traditum est' and those who, even at some risk, are willing to prove each new thing, in the hope of retaining what is good in it along with the old. Both attitudes are doubtless represented in a gathering of this size and variety, and that is a hopeful sign that our discussions may bear real fruit.

Those who have been present at previous LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conferences will recall the many shapes in which this problem continually presented itself, no matter what subject came under discussion. Last year, for example, we were engaged largely with the 'spiritual sense' of Holy Scripture and with the special symbolism to which its interpretation has given rise. No one could fail to realize that in order to share in the great riches there displayed, many modern people require a patient course of re-education in an outlook and a whole way of thought which have become alien to their daily outlook. This was evident in connection with gaining a proper appreciation of the Psalter, the basis of the official prayer of the Church. How strange, too, for anyone educated in these days, is the ancient Jewish cosmogony in the early part of Genesis, or indeed, the whole concept of history in that and the other Old Testament books. Equally puzzling and even exasperating must be what passes for natural history in Jacobus de Voragine or any of the other quarries of scholastic learning about nature, and the visible world. Exploded these things may be, but they once helped to form a satisfying religious-scientific synthesis, which was guarded from serious dogmatic error by the indefectible ecclesiastical *magisterium*. As scientific explanations such things are void and for some people there is little to take their place. Instead, we have a widespread notion, the residue of recent anti-religious criticism, that true science, considered as something apart, has knocked away these rotten

props of religious dogma, and now goes on developing as a substitute for, if not the positive enemy of religion. Religion itself, the growth of dogma, the history of Christianity, may be studied by scientific method, but the two spheres remain separate and somehow inimical. *We* do not believe so, but we have to deal with people who take it for granted.

The same problem came to the fore in our debates on Christian fellowship, or the need of understanding the mentality of primitive man (including 'neo-primitive' men). It concerned not merely the communication of doctrines and ideas, but the very means of doing so, including linguistic and all other pedagogical techniques.

It will not be out of place to indicate briefly here the manner in which the problem might be stated and then solved in a rather formalistic and doctrinaire fashion, as in certain old-fashioned manuals of theology and scholastic philosophy. The method was to minimize the problem to such a degree as to imply its effective non-existence. This was, of course, unfair to the more serious of our critics and served only to exasperate them; consequently it was very dangerous to our own position.

In our introduction to the Sacred Sciences we still normally make out a case, and a respectable one, for such a systemization of all human knowledge (actual and possible) that in it theology occupies a rightfully supreme position. We attempt to show that theology is a true science, and indeed the mistress and queen of all the others. Since it is a participation in God's own truth, based on his revealing authority, led up to, supported and clarified by the certain deliveries of the human reason, therefore all the other sciences, dependent as they are upon human reason alone, must be regarded as tributary or ancillary to theology. The supreme sacred science leads us towards the eternal contemplation of God. Primarily speculative, it is nevertheless eminently practical also, because it teaches us the actual means which, even in our conditions of time and space, lead to that great end—contemplation and enjoyment of God. There is really no true knowledge, and no legitimate art, which has a meaning apart; it is significant only in so far as it conduces to the end of theology.

I might perhaps be expected, as a Franciscan, to tie my remarks on to such a work as the *De Reductione omnium artium ad theologiam* of the Seraphic Doctor; or perhaps to adopt as my text the secondary motto of our Order (also associated with the name of St

Bonaventure): 'in sanctitate et doctrina'. But since the whole of that sort of synthesis is a typical product of the Ages of Faith, and we now live at an epoch in which for a vast number of our educated contemporaries that synthesis has disintegrated, another approach seems advisable. If we are to have a new synthesis out of the fragments of our ancient Christian culture, then assuredly it will not be made with the help of Augustine's Plato, the Schoolmen's Aristotle, or the seventeenth-century mystical theology *alone*. For better or worse (and I can see no reason why not for better), our materials, even the most venerable of them, will be sieved through the mesh of modern scientific method and outlook.

The problem really does exist and thrusts itself on all who have to live a spiritual life or teach others to do so. We live in a mental climate deeply influenced by real and sudden scientific advance, which is, as yet, by no means well digested. The danger and uncertainty necessarily inherent in the situation is aggravated because we were so ill-prepared spiritually for it. One has but to reflect on the great changes in such studies as physics, psychology and anthropology alone during the last couple of generations in order to realize the urgency of a proper adjustment between the professional theologian and the professional scientist if either is to retain the confidence of the people. Theological manuals still confine themselves to safe generalizations on these matters. There can be no real conflict, they tell us, between religion and science, for both are parts of the one supreme truth. Specialists in each field must tirelessly investigate that truth according to their scope and with their appropriate method. Contradictions can be only apparent and are to be solved by patient re-investigation, or, where evidence is lacking, by humble suspension of judgment. This is all true enough, but sometimes small comfort to the actual workers, especially the vulgarizers. There are, however, a number of recent papal pronouncements which show a different attitude, more enlightened, positive and therefore helpful. Specialists in psychology, in gynaecology and other branches of study have been able to hear authoritative treatment of their own chosen subjects by a Pontiff who has taken trouble to be up to date, who appreciates their problems, and who can talk to them in their own language. The 'more true science progresses, the more it discovers God, as if God were waiting *aux aguets*, behind every door that

science opens'. (Pius XII, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 22 November, 1951.)

On the other hand we must not forget the large number of those who look for a new synthesis in which the claims of religion are not recognized, or only inadequately. Theology would be no queen in the Russellian new world, and readers of Kathleen Notcutt's recent attack on a group of English writers who have sought to draw once again upon the funds of Christian theology and tradition will know how the attitude which we tend to take for granted can arouse not mere derision and rejection, but indignation of an almost hysterical and panicky kind. (*The Emperor's Clothes*, 1954.)

Whether we happen to like it or not, our age is a scientific age in a special sense, and if it continues at all (a point on which some of the scientists themselves have been manifesting a certain lack of optimism lately) it will become yet more scientific. It is much more self-consciously so than former ages, and increasingly voluble on the matter. Mgr Knox, in a sad mood engendered by his contemplation of *God and the Atom*, calls it a 'science-ridden age'. This multiplies the uncertainties that we are suffering. Pseudo-science spreads its influence even more easily than true science. This makes it relevant to insist (always pre-supposing our survival) that whether religion or science reigns in the synthesis of the future, whether our lives be regulated by theology, or by materialism, or communism, or any other -ism, there will undoubtedly be a mysticism of sorts, and it is our task now to do what we can to ensure its being a salutary instead of a harmful mysticism. David Knowles, in his study of *The English Mystics*, remarks that 'it is somewhat tempting to say that a wave of mystical expression comes over the world immediately after an epoch of scientific progress. Thus the mystical fourteenth century succeeded the scholastic and legalistic thirteenth . . . the mysticism of St Teresa, Boehme and the English Quakers followed a period of controversial theology, during which a vast territory of hitherto uncultivated land had been fenced by dogmatic formulas and new canons and rubrics, and finally, the cult of mysticism in our own day is consequent upon an era of scientific method and discovery in the world of religion and ethics.' (p. 42. But note that he discusses and partly disputes it. *ibid.* 43 i.e. in 1927.) Is the age of nuclear fission to produce a *mystique* reinforcing the one we

know, or to devastate it like another Hiroshima? New spatial aspirations are being felt, and the planetary explorers are straining at the leash; but for what? To conquer new solitudes and silences wherein to deepen our union with the Creator of the vast universe, or merely to enlarge the spiritual deserts of the known world and people new spheres with terrifying ghosts? A new world order may be served by perfected robots and governed by a bureau of cybernetics, but will it be a better world? As Christians we are bound to hope, and entitled to be optimistic, in our reliance on the inexhaustible riches of Christ and his divine omnipotence, but it would be a false hope and an ill-founded optimism which failed to recognize the very real dangers lurking in our present state.

Although I do not wish to prejudice what is going to be said seriously about the serious side of scientific symbolism in contemporary life, I may perhaps be allowed to note in passing the already dangerous prevalence of pseudo-scientific symbols. Some of you may have picked up Aldous Huxley's slim volume, *The Doors of Perception*, with the same interest as I. This work set out to give an account of its author's experiences under the influence of the drug mescaline. His perception of ordinary objects became immensely more vivid, satisfying and significant: whilst his normal habits of worrying about, puzzling over, willing and wishing in regard to them were dulled. Interesting to those who are interested in that sort of thing, but not quite so interesting, I think, as one had been led to expect. There was the rueful feeling of having been bamboozled again, as with each new wonder-food, wonder-diet, wonder-drug that is launched upon its dubious career. The doors of perception were opened but not wide enough: one got a fleeting glance within, serving only to whet the curiosity, but one could not get a foot on the door-mat. This was irritating enough, but there was worse behind. We have grown accustomed to Aldous Huxley as a commentator on the deepest aspects of religious psychology: more than once he has undertaken to interpret for us key passages in the history of western spirituality, pronouncing fearlessly on essentials no less than accidentals. Thus, when he comes straight (straight?) from drug-induced contemplation of a rose or the books in his study, to suggest that the Churches should 'cash in', so to speak, on this new discovery and use it as a normal technique of spiritual develop-

ment, replacing the traditional modes of ascetical preparation for mystical union, we feel that we are being hustled. Are we to look forward to a future in which the clinic will replace the cloister or retreat-house? Shall we be able to by-pass the 'dark nights of the soul' by aid of the hypodermic needle, or will it be merely a matter of getting tablets from the local health stores and having them specially blessed at the presbytery? But an outlook which seems so bizarre to us is not uncommon and not uncharacteristic in this age which is proud to call itself scientific.

Recently my life was threatened, by a small boy with a toy pistol: but no, there was a tiny plastic addition of indeterminate shape and function which transformed the toy into a space-gun with a devastating atomic ray. Space-fiction, written and broadcast, not only has its devotees amongst sensation-lovers as we should expect: it has also produced its own serious criticism. I was astonished recently in the London streets to note how many little bicycle-shops, having also a few radio and television sets for sale, were pretentiously describing themselves as 'specialists in electronics'. The minds and hearts of many of our contemporaries are already filling up not so much with the new furniture of science, as with the bric-à-brac of its less reputable step-sister. How will this new stuff of the mind fit in with the old? Or will it fit in at all? Here is one by no means negligible aspect of the problem of conveying, as our Lord himself did, the great religious truths by means of the current symbols of everyday life.

But to return to the main problem. What are the fundamentals on which its solution depends? Speaking generally, the fact of Christian sanctity must be independent of any discoveries that human science has made or can make. Our Saviour's own programme for perfection is larger than any accidents of time and place. Any expression of that programme, to be effective, must be equally transcendent: in its essentials it must be an intelligible and workable scheme handed from man to man. Its accidentals may change, to the immediate advantage or disadvantage of particular individuals in different times and places. But such changes are, in my opinion, like those introduced by the invention of printing, or of modern means of communication, always of mixed, equivocal effect. It behoves us both as learners and teachers of Christian holiness to be enlightened and discreetly selective in the use we make of them.

But now to enumerate some of the great classic positions of theology which appear to me to have the closest bearing on the matter we are discussing.

First, we must stress the doctrine of the eternity of God, in his Unity and Trinity, utterly transcendent of the categories of time and space by virtue of the fact that he and he alone brought them, like created being itself, out of nothing, by a free act of his omnipotent will. Accordingly, no actual or possible modification of them either *in se* or in any created mind can do anything at all to change the essential relationships subsisting between God the Creator and every part of what he has created.

Secondly, the eternal generation of the Father's only-begotten Son, *in principio*, is equally transcendent and absolute in value. Even its temporal expression through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and all his unique mediatorship shares in the eternity of his divine nature. Hence all the changeful phenomena of created existence, from the beginning to the end of time, pivot around Christ as their central and fixed point. He who is *principium et finis*. 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever', suffers no change: neither do those who are fully incorporated in him.

Thirdly, the redemptive work of Christ—forgiveness of sins and infusion of supernatural life—is also of permanent and Catholic value, for all men, in all times, and in all places. The very core of it is the application to us of Christ's merits through the sacraments of the Church coupled with her charismatic preaching of the doctrine and means of sanctity. A human perfection—limited, no doubt, yet described boldly as being like to God's own perfection—is authentically put before us as universally possible and universally obligatory.

Fourthly, since human nature itself does not essentially change, certain basic techniques of asceticism and prayer, attested alike by reason and the experience of many thousands of holy lives, when properly joined with the revealed teaching of the Church, guarded and controlled by her infallible magisterium, remain unshakable and irreversible in their Godward tendency.

Lastly, the progressive growth of devotional life in the Church, no less than in her dogmatic and moral teaching, ensures that no essential gain, from whatever source obtained, can ever be wholly lost. On the contrary, what we possess will become plainer,

fuller, richer, and more scientifically exact in statement.¹ Partial, accidental, local and temporal *obscuration* there may be, but when it occurs, it will seldom if ever be possible to attribute it to external catastrophes alone: it will always be at least partly someone's fault. It is this which justifies and renders imperative a discussion of this kind.

To hold tenaciously to the faith one has received, through thick and thin, even under persecution, even to the point of martyrdom, is virtuous: indeed there are circumstances in which that is the only sort of virtue we can practise. But normally we are under obligation to live our faith and to grow in it as far as we can. But the growth may seem to be intermittent: any time-lag between our reception of new scientific data and the full integration of them with our faith, to the enhancement of both, is necessarily a time of trial and temptation. But that is God's own way of making us worthy to enter into a higher contemplation of his inexhaustible Wisdom and Beauty.

¹ 'Crescat igitur oportet et multum vehementerque proficiat tam singulorum quam omnium, tam unius hominis quam totius ecclesiae, aetatum et saeculorum gradibus, intelligentia, scientia, sapientia, sed in uno dumtaxat genere, in eodem sensu, eademque sententia.' (Vincent of Lerins, *Commonit. an.* 434, ch. 23 RJ 2174.)



SYMBOLS AND THE SCIENTISTS*

DONALD NICHOLL

I WOULD not venture to read a paper on this subject to a gathering of natural scientists did I not hold that the process by which the natural scientist comes to understand the natural world is often analogous to the process of understanding carried out by other scientists, such as historians, for instance. Holding this opinion, I believe that other scientists may have helpful observations to offer to natural scientists on methodology and the basic principles of understanding phenomena.

The three observations I wish to put forward are as follows. That in all our knowing-processes (the natural sciences included)

* A paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, September 1954.

we employ images or symbols,¹ through which our mind's eye can see the objects our mind is searching for. Secondly, that the mind's capacity for throwing up symbols is especially vital in the discovery of new truths—or even new techniques. And thirdly, that any scientist intensely concerned with the details of his subject will inevitably be drawn to ask the meaning of that whole universe of which the details are a part; his question and his answer will have to be given in some symbolic form.

The first point is a familiar one, and has long been accepted by many thinkers. Confronted by the mass of colours and feelings recorded by our senses, we should not know how to begin making sense of them at all, how to discern their shapes, relationships and coherence were it not for the image-ing power of our minds. Our present concern does not permit an extensive demonstration of this point but it will be sufficient to refer to the experiments of *Gestalt* psychologists such as David Katz,² physiologists such as Kurt Goldstein,³ and to quote the words of J. Z. Young: 'There is a capacity in the central nervous system which enables the animal to react to a unified "world" instead of to a series of discrete stimuli.'⁴ In the animal that is man this capacity for detecting unity amidst the apparent chaos of his impressions is actualized by means of images, or symbols—if we take symbols to mean that which gives coherence to our view of phenomena. By throwing up such images or symbols our minds enable us to see things through them to which we were previously blind; it is as though the mind has a capacity for making windows on all sides of itself to let in the mediating light. At least, that seems to be the explanation most in accordance with the descriptions given by scientists of how their own minds work.

But notice, if we are to follow the descriptions given by scientists, that this function cannot be consciously switched on or off at will. We cannot provide more windows for our minds simply by taking thought, any more than we can add a cubit to

1 I do not attempt a definition of 'symbol' for the very good reason that such a definition cannot be given; if it could, then symbols would not serve the function which they will be seen to serve in the rest of this paper. And if the argument should sometimes seem circular I would ask the reader to remember that not all circles are vicious circles—in fact, the most profound way of reasoning does not follow the linear, activist, syllogistic pattern of formal logic, but that movement towards a truer, more all-embracing centre of experience characteristic of contemplatives, and itself symbolized by a mandala.

2 *Gestalt Psychology*. Methuen, 1951.

3 *Der Aufbau des Organismus*. The Hague, 1934.

4 q.v. Agnes Arber. *The Mind and the Eye*. Cambridge, 1954, p. 103.

our stature by a like process. There is a quite startling, unpremeditated quality about it which betokens the co-operation of unconscious forces. Consider, for instance, how the botanist Agnes Arber had been studying Queen-Anne's-Lace for as much as half a century without noticing a certain configuration of the plant, until one day she grasped it; after this, 'any plant that came under observation was found to show this salient feature so strikingly as to leave the observer bewildered and humiliated at having been totally blind to it year after year'.⁵ Similar illustrations could be given almost indefinitely to show how the mind is not simply a passive recorder of sense impressions but is constantly generating its own means of understanding phenomena. Yet at the same time, the mind only achieves its desire with the aid of the unconscious, rather like the archery initiate in Zen Buddhism who can hit the target every time once he has learnt not to aim at it consciously.⁶ And the similarity to artistic creativity will also be obvious to anyone who thinks of Leonardo da Vinci patiently sitting before the canvas on which he was to paint the Last Supper and waiting for the face of Christ to form before him—doing nothing, so that observers began to suspect him of defrauding his patrons.

This stress upon what I would loosely call the creative activity of the mind in the normal process of knowing makes it easier to understand the part played by image-ing and symbol-making in the discovery of new truths and new techniques. For we must insist that truths are generally discovered not so much on account of new evidence appearing as on account of the evidence being seen against the background of a symbol which gives coherence to what had previously seemed chaos. Newton was not the first to see an apple falling, but he was the first to see the falling apple against the background of the stars; and it was his conviction of the orderliness holding together the apples and the stars which enabled him to formulate the law of gravity. Indeed, it would seem that evidence only yields what can be properly described as 'facts' when that evidence has been interpreted in terms of some all-embracing symbol. As Cassirer puts it, 'We must refer our observations to a system of well-ordered symbols in order to make them coherent and interpretable in terms of scientific concepts.'⁷

⁵ *The Mind and the Eye*, p. 117.

⁶ cf. Henigel. *Archery in the Art of Zen*. Kegan Paul, 1953.

⁷ *Essay on Man*, p. 217.

Evidence only acquires factual status when it has been interpreted against the background of some convincing symbol. This feature of our knowing may go far to explain some of the impasses in which scientific thinking is so frequently found. The impasse in regard to psi phenomena, for example: no matter how much evidence of psi phenomena is brought forward sceptics refuse to accept it, and will continue to do so because they cannot fit the evidence into any system acceptable to their minds. It is not the evidence which is lacking but the adequate symbol through which the evidence is seen to hang together. Presumably if a sceptic's mind were to generate such a symbol he would describe this happening very much as Agnes Arber describes her realization of plant-configuration—and then, for the first time, he would be justified in describing psi phenomena in factual terms.

It would seem, then, as if the emergence of symbols through which new knowledge is mediated cannot be deliberately provoked. Apparently it is a gift and certain individuals or families are granted an extraordinary share of this imaginative insight. The Hopkins family, for instance, has given us Gerard Manley Hopkins, and the poet's own father, as well as Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins and his daughter Jacquetta Hawkes, each of whom has enriched our understanding of the universe in one way or another. Of the natural scientist in this family succession a leading biochemist has written: 'Frederick Gowland Hopkins, the instaurator of biochemistry in modern Britain, was possessed of a particularly penetrating gift of imagination, which enabled him to visualize the protoplasm of the cell as a kind of chemical factory, where a large number of reactions were able to proceed in close contiguity without becoming disorganized.'⁸ And it is the same imaginative gifts that have quickened the archaeological work of his daughter so finely displayed in *A Land*.

At this point I should presumably turn the argument and maintain that the emergence of appropriate symbols, far from being outside our control, can be directly traced to religious inspiration. And there are respectable thinkers who do seem to maintain just this. Mircea Éliade, for example, Professor of Comparative Religion at Paris, asserts that the relationship between science and religion has been seen topsey-turvey; that the myths of fertility gods are not an extrapolation of man's view of natural forces;

⁸ J. H. Needham, in *Aspects of Form*, ed. L. L. Whyte, p. 83.

rather it was through the fertility myths that men came to understand the cycle of the life, death and rebirth of vegetation.⁹ Similarly, André Varagnac has argued that the invention of the wheel and the chariot were first made in a religious context; that the use of the symbolic wheel of fire in association with the sacred horse precedes their use for secular purposes.¹⁰ Only in terms of the supernatural do natural processes become intelligible.

But whilst I would not go so far as this, and maintain that the Christian heritage of symbols directly produces the appropriate means of understanding the natural world, I do believe that it does so indirectly. For if there is one thing taught us by the history of science, it is that discoveries are seldom made in isolation; they are made when the level of imagination in the community reaches such a pitch of intensity and richness that it lifts the individual thinker onto the very crest of his own powers. And at no time in history has this pitch of intensity so often been reached as during those periods when communities have been swept into the richness of the Christian faith, as the witness of Christian artists, poets, musicians and scientists proves. The great age of modern science begins with a typically Christian sentiment expressing a conviction of the European community: 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies.' And perhaps that great age has come to an end now that the faith has ebbed so low, and a modern biologist finds himself sadly compelled to exclaim, 'There are fewer things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies.'¹¹ For it is inconceivable that men to whom the universe has become a dull grey meaningless accident should retain the spiritual energy to penetrate ever further into what their predecessors termed 'the wonders of nature'.

And such men will be in a yet more hopeless position if we turn to them for our final question and ask them if they can enlighten us on the meaning of the whole universe. The question, to them, is nonsensical since their *a priori* dictum of despair decrees questions to be meaningless which they cannot prove to be answerable. (As if human beings have ever known what could be done until they have tried! On such *a priori* grounds Columbus was a fool to sail for America.) But any scientist who looks into the book of nature for its meaning, and not simply for its lettering, will find

⁹ *Traité de l'histoire des religions.*

¹⁰ *Civilization Traditionnelle et Genus de Vie.* Paris, 1947.

¹¹ The French biologist, Jean Rostand.

himself echoing the voice of Jacquetta Hawkes as she speaks of the coming of spring to this world of ours:

'It came suddenly. About one hundred million years ago, when the chalk of our present downs was slowly settling on the floors of warm, clear seas, and when dinosaurs, fantastic as man's imagined dragons, had possession of the land, the ancient ever-green vegetation rapidly made way for flowering plants and deciduous trees. Already there were varieties of fig, magnolia, poplar and plane, and many honey-bearing flowers. Indeed, it may have been the discovery of the benefits and pleasures to be exchanged between pollen-carrying bees and honeyed blossoms which excited the sudden burgeoning of vegetation and the birth of the spring season.

'From that time onwards, spring has always been present on earth, yet it was long before it achieved the variety and perfection we enjoy; long before the song-birds came to add their celebrations to those of the plants. It has, in fact, taken unimaginable stretches of time to create the youthful season from the ancient stuff of our planet.

'It is impossible for us to interpret symbols composed on so god-like a scale. Yet it seems to me that there must be some meaning for humanity in this history, in this vision of life growing younger and younger. Is not something of the same sort happening within the human mind? Sometimes we feel old, decadent even, but looking with a deeper sense of perspective can we not see our imaginative powers burgeoning like our earthly spring? Surely there is some message of hope written in letters too vast for our comprehension.'¹²

That quotation provides us, I think, with the general mood and disposition that should animate the natural scientist as he begins to ask himself this ultimate, all-embracing question. But, being couched in general terms, it does not bring out the unique urgency with which the natural scientist is brought face to face—in the inescapable, concrete details of his work. As an expression of this urgency I can do no better than cite some sentences from a scientist who has devoted his life to the study of parasites. To him I leave the last word:

'If the bird on the bough sing clearly of Heaven, the predatory carnivore, stealing upon it to strike it down, exhibits no less than

¹² *Sunday Times*, April 18, 1953.

its victim the lineaments of God. The parasitic animal, following its ways in the body of either of these creatures, must also reveal these lineaments as does also the man who observes, with anger and despair, its destruction of the beauty he adores.

'The dilemma, then, is this. We try, in our human pride and self-centredness, to find a God who shall have made a universe suited to our ideas. . . . The way out is the way of the great objective artist . . . of conquering the self and entering into the souls of the objects which we perceive. . . . The attempt to do this, to enter into the non-human, whether it be living or not, and to recreate it, when it is understood, for the contemplation of our fellow-men, is the task of the saint, the artist and the philosopher rather than that of the biologist. He is, however, a poor biologist who does not try to be something of a seeker after God as well.'¹³

¹³ G. Lapage. *Parasitic Animals*. Cambridge, 1951, pp. 333-4.



THE SCIENTIST'S INTEGRITY*

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

I RECENTLY attended the meeting of the British Association at Oxford, at which a number of distinguished scientists emerged from the mysterious shadows of their laboratories and tried to give the general public an idea of what they had been doing—with varying degrees of success, since science has travelled far from the time when it was readily comprehensible to all educated people. One of the things that struck me was the number of times that the speakers went out of their way to emphasize that there was no longer any conflict—indeed, any possibility of conflict—between science and religion. It was natural enough, at an Oxford meeting, to recall the celebrated dispute which took place there in 1860 between Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce over the question of evolution. Tempers on that occasion ran very high. Nowadays, as was pointed out, such a scene is unthinkable. The

* A paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, September 1954.

Church and the scientists have come to realize more clearly the extent of their authority, and no longer seek to provide answers to those questions of pure knowledge which are known to lie within the other's province alone. There is at last some possibility of restoring the old harmony between natural and revealed knowledge which was broken four hundred years ago with the rise of modern science.

But it is hardly enough that science and religion are no longer active enemies. There is still a widespread feeling that science has dispensed with the need for religion: that though it may not be able to get rid of it, it can now afford to ignore the older authority, which can no longer do any harm. I do not think that this is the view of scientists themselves, however. Generalizations are easy to make, and usually impossible to verify or refute, but in my own limited experience (limited to Oxford, which is a highly peculiar place) scientists are nearly always interested in questions of religion—more so than any other occupational group of similar standing. I want to suggest that this comes from the nature of science itself. I shall try to indicate certain characteristics of scientific enquiry which make those who pursue it more open than others are to accept the full Christian revelation. This is how I would interpret C. A. Coulson's description of science as a 'religious activity', both in his recent Riddell lectures¹ and in his British Association discourse *Science and Religion*. A similar interpretation might also be given to the earlier series of Riddell lectures given by Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society*.² Since their views are not widely known except to scientists, I shall try to say something about them here.

It will first be necessary to say something about the nature of scientific theories. This is in fact rather a controversial matter, and not all scientists would accept what I have to say, but I do not see how to avoid some examination of the question. My remarks are based on the physical sciences, but with proper allowance for very real differences of method will, I think, apply to other forms of knowledge. Modern physics, then, is not an affair of collecting large numbers of observations and trying to draw a general pattern from them, rather like the old botanists collected their specimens and arranged them in elaborate classifications of

¹ *Christianity in an Age of Science* (O.U.P., 1953).

² O.U.P., 1946.

genera and species according to the features they had in common. A physicist starts from an already highly developed knowledge, and his problem is how to push it one stage further forward. He gets some sort of 'hunch'; how, it is not easy to say, any more than it is easy to say how the idea for a picture or a poem first comes. It is this place of intuition—the inspired guess, if you like—in modern science which gives it a claim to stand amongst the imaginative arts. Such a guess made by a non-scientist would have very little chance of proving correct. The power to guess right comes from a long formation within the scientific community: a long conditioning of the mind within a tradition, just as the painter or the musician must submit to long technical training until, by some strange paradox, his mind is able to create freely some new art-form. You cannot lay down rules for scientific discovery any more than you can lay down rules for making a poem, though there are rough rules for judging it after it is made. Everything depends on the scientist's own spontaneity—his freedom within the tradition.

But there is a second factor in the making of a scientific theory besides this free, creative, artistic element. A theory is not merely a work of the mind; it must also give a picture of an objective world outside us. It is based on experience, and confirmed in experience. The intuition must be confirmed or refuted by devising a suitable experiment; it must be tested in solid fact. The scientist must have an absolute adherence to truth; his theories must reflect the structure of a real world. There is a tendency nowadays to minimize this element in a scientific theory; to think of it as entirely a product of the mind, a convenient way of ordering the facts, without an objective basis, something merely conventional. Such a position is difficult to refute by logical argument, in much the same way as is philosophical solipsism; against such academic views one can only appeal to common experience. To a working scientist actually engaged in research, there is an overwhelming sense of given-ness about the simple forms that he uncovers from their hiding-place in the detail of nature. One knows that in a sense a scientific theory comes from one's own mind, yet equally clearly it comes from outside you, from an objective world that has revealed itself only on coming into contact with your own mind. Coulson quotes³ the words of Bragg: 'When one has

sought long for the clue to a secret of nature and is rewarded by grasping some part of the answer, it comes as a blinding flash of revelation: it comes as something new, more simple and at the same time more aesthetically satisfying than anything one could have created in one's own mind. This conviction is of something revealed, and not something imagined.'

Scientific theory, then, has both a subjective aspect, due to the activity of our minds, and an objective one, in so far as it is received passively from outside us. I shall consider this second aspect first of all. Coulson has actually suggested it as a basis for the affirmation of God's existence, and I believe that this has more to be said for it than might at first appear. It is not an argument from within science, as was Paley's argument from design (really from the geometrical order revealed by Newtonian mechanics), or as are certain more recent arguments from cosmological hypothesis. It depends on our seeing all scientific theory as something objectively given to us; it is in fact identical with St Augustine's standard argument from the nature of truth. Augustine persuades us to understand truth as arising from the illumination of our minds by the action of God. Such an argument is sometimes suspect because it is based on interior rather than on external experience, but I do not think this suspicion justified unless the experience in question is subjective, which it is not in the case under consideration.

But it is time to take a stand on more solid ground. I want to examine the effect on the scientist himself of the work in which he engages; still, first of all, from the objective aspect. I suppose the majority of people today tend to look on their jobs as something pretty separate from the rest of their lives. They have no sense of their work being a vocation. I am not talking of Catholics, or even of certain other kinds of Christian; but of the vast number of people up and down the country who have no one to explain to them that all things can be done for the glory of God. The scientific community, though not necessarily consciously, forms something of an exception to this rule. This is because, as we have seen, the scientist is devoted in a very particular way to the discovery of truth. So of course is the philosopher in his study, but by the nature of things there are far more scientists in the world than there are philosophers, even though they are not all doing very important work—and it could of course be argued that the

deepest insight into nature that can be given by science, is superficial in comparison with philosophical truth. Yet every scientist can feel himself to be a part of a community whose motto, also, is 'truth'. There are research laboratories in which all the workers, down to the humblest, whose task is pure routine, are imbued with this feeling of sharing in a huge endeavour—mankind's most spectacular attempt to discover truth. Now it seems to me that any work which brings one into such direct contact with reality (and I have insisted on the objective nature of scientific truth) can easily come to be regarded, consciously or not, as the worship of God.

But before I develop this argument, I should like to say something of the scientist's attitude towards this reality, with which he is brought into contact. In order to do this I must now draw attention to the second element which I distinguished in scientific theory—that which comes from the activity of the scientist's own mind. Classical scientists tended to view nature dispassionately, as a dead landscape to be gazed on from far away. Hence the standard description of nature in terms of neutral particles, reduced, in Whitehead's famous phrase, to 'a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly'. But now, as we have seen, the process of scientific discovery is not thought of as a passive sorting-out of fact: it requires the scientist to be actively 'engaged-with' the reality he seeks to know. He must pursue his attack 'with zeal and hope and a sense of personal identification with the experiment'. Nature has become living to him rather than dead; to be wooed rather than bullied into giving up her secrets. Scientists have come to realize (largely, I think, because of Whitehead's pioneer work) that they will never understand nature unless they realize that they are part of her, as well as being her knower and her judge. No doubt the influence of biological theories of evolution (especially since elements of purpose have taken their place beside the mechanism of blind chance) has been important in producing this change of view. Some physicists have tried to reinforce it by an argument from within science itself; they point to the conclusion of quantum theory in which all observation of nature necessarily alters slightly that which is observed, so that an exact answer to certain questions can never be obtained. Personally I doubt whether such a discovery of the limits of observational technique has any relevance to the

general view of scientific theory which I have been putting forward; the role of the subject's activity in all observation was emphasized as long ago as Kant. The important point to grasp is this new sense, in science, of the bond between man and nature, and hence of her dignity.

I have insisted on the scientist's contact with the reality of nature, because it is this which saves his search after knowledge from being no more than an elaborate game. And now there emerges this sense of personal relationship with nature. We all accept readily enough the idea of sanctification through work; less readily perhaps, since the fourteenth-century 'failure of nerve', the idea of sanctification through intellectual work. Yet if a man's talent lies here, he has no right to neglect it; knowledge is one of the many paths through which one may come to wisdom. It seems to me that there is a genuine sense in which the scientist may be considered the successor of the old craftsmen, and the laboratory, as much as the garden or the workshop, a place for shaping the stubborn fact of reality. And if this is so, the scientist is surely open to receive a fuller understanding of his activity through the Christian revelation. This at any rate is how I understand Coulson's conclusion⁴: 'to accept Nature as, in some senses, given: to receive the gift, and behave in a creaturely fashion towards it: to believe that it carries with it a meaning and significance, and to seek, in reflection, what that meaning is—this surely is to act religiously'. What is this but Pascal's '*toutes choses couvrent quelque mystère; toutes choses sont des voiles qui couvrent Dieu*'? It is an easy step to understanding nature as a Christian does, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; '*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum*', sings the Church at Pentecost. 'Behold, I make all things new.'

There is yet another feature of scientific research which I should like to elaborate. To spend one's life in a search for truth is obviously a good and harmless thing; it is worth much more if it costs a man something, if it involves a real temptation that must be overcome. Now obviously a scientist has no direct temptation to falsify his results; apart from the uselessness of such an action, which stultifies his whole aim of discovering the facts as they are, the fraud would be detected as soon as someone else tried to repeat his experiment. There are, however, subtler temptations to try

his integrity, which are connected with questions of interpretation. From the sketch I gave of the nature of scientific knowledge, it will have become clear what an intensely personal affair it is. Nothing could be further from a merely mechanical process—though a great deal of sheer routine work is of course involved as well. Yet ultimately all depends on the personal judgment of the scientist. It is he who has to weigh the evidence for or against his theory; to decide whether an observation may be disregarded for the time being, because it does not fit in, or whether it has to be accepted, though it destroy the whole elaborate structure that has been building up. Only the experimenter himself can do it; only he has the 'feel' of the situation. So the position is a complex one. The scientist is his own judge; he must have all the judicial coolness, remoteness if you like, which will enable him to make a correct decision. Yet all the time—and here I cannot do better than borrow Polanyi's own words⁵: 'far from being neutral at heart, he is himself passionately interested in the outcome of the procedure. He must be, for otherwise he will never discover a problem at all, and certainly not advance towards its solution.' He continues: 'problems of this kind can be resolved by no established rule, and the decision to be taken is a matter for the scientist's personal judgment; we now see that this judgment has a moral aspect to it. We see higher interests conflicting with lower interests. That must involve questions of conviction and of faithfulness to an ideal; it makes the scientist's judgment a matter of conscience . . . we recognize the note struck by conscience in the tone of personal responsibility in which the scientist declares his ultimate claims.'

This note of faithfulness to an ideal does seem truly to merit the use of the word 'moral'. One has to experience the long labour of months, years, required to work out an idea, the growing excitement as it seems to be being confirmed, the sudden crash as a new fact appears telling against it, and all one's labour seems wasted. There is real temptation here; not of course to anything so crude as suppressing the fact, but to explaining it away. For this can sometimes be a legitimate thing to do; many of the great scientific theories have been accepted for years in plain defiance of certain facts, which eventually were seen to fall into place. One's whole training in the tradition has to be brought to bear on the fact, to

⁵ Polanyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.

get its 'feel' right, to judge its significance; only you can do it: yet on your decision hangs the possible loss of a year's work, the possible rapid advancement (if you are a young scientist) to the position you covet. It is indeed a matter of conscience—a conscience schooled in the tradition, especially under the personal guidance and inspiration of one of the older scientists (for learning science very much depends on being apprenticed to a master, as in any other art). Ultimately it is a matter of individual, personal qualities. Not all men, not even all clever men, make good scientists. As Einstein himself has said, 'most people think it is the intellect that makes a great scientist. They are wrong; it is the character.'⁶

I have tried to bring out three characteristics of the work done by a scientist—the struggle it demands with 'irreducible and stubborn fact'; the sense of personal engagement with that reality; and the moral purification involved. If a Christian can reach sanctity through the labour of his hands, it seems equally clear that he can reach it through labour such as this. But it is mainly of the scientist who is not a Christian that I am thinking now. I have said that his work requires of him, or produces in him, or both, a character which is open to be acted upon by the Holy Spirit. The scientist is the man of goodwill, such as Newman asked for at the end of the *Grammar of Assent*, 'imbued with the religious opinions and sentiments which I have identified with natural religion', and so a fit subject to receive the truths of faith, his mind ready to be convinced by the Church if she will but speak to him. Yet even where he remains unconverted, a scientist may still do much good in the modern world. There is no doubt a real danger that he may be made use of by unscrupulous politicians for their own ends, or be pushed into a false position by the hero-worship of an ignorant public. To some extent it has already happened. But the scientist is usually on the look-out for such dangers, and is proof against them. He is not prepared to acquiesce silently in the abuse of the knowledge he has wrested from nature at such cost; and he does not like being mistaken for a prophet or a priest. To discuss this latter point would lead me too far from my subject, which has been the scientist himself, not the age which he has helped to make; but I cannot conclude without saying something of his attitude to the abuse of science. Respons-

⁶ Quoted Coulson, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

ible scientists are coming forward more and more (if not yet in the degree one would like to see) to condemn the immoral use of scientific knowledge. The atomic bomb forms an obvious example. Far too little was done, and the matter has now passed beyond anyone's control; yet who is to say what might not have occurred had proper guidance been given the scientists by those more expert in ethical matters? Oppenheimer⁷ spoke for many others when he witnessed to a sense of sin at the realization of what he had helped to make. There are other grave questions coming up for decision: to name only two, there is the possibility of controlling, to a much greater degree than hitherto, other men's minds and wills; and there is the question of a forcible limitation of world population. I believe that scientists are going to speak out about the moral aspects of questions such as these, and I believe they will be listened to. Obviously those scientists who are Catholics, though only a small minority, may be able to play a considerable part by their personal influence in forming the consciences of their fellow workers: a great opportunity, and a correspondingly great responsibility. Here again theologians must co-operate by explaining clearly the moral principles involved—a work of collaboration which could well take place at conferences such as these. I am sure that in this way much can be done, for as I have tried to show, the soil is good, and only awaits the seed. For good or ill the future lies with science, and I trust that the Church will realize it.

⁷ Quoted Coulson, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



THE SCIENTIST'S APPROACH TO FAITH*

E. F. CALDIN

THE scientist is first of all a person, set in the framework of family and society. The problems arising from his own make-up, and from the current social scene with its special stresses, will often bulk much larger in his life than anything concerned with science. However, there are some aspects of

* A paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, September 1954.

a scientist's life that mould his general approach to Christ, whether he is aware of them or not. The work of the physical scientist, for instance, is concerned with nature, regarded as a closed system—not with God, nor even with human persons as persons. He abstracts from the Cause of nature, and from human causes, and concentrates on the relations between natural facts. This, again, commits him to an interest in the *minutiae* of sense-knowledge which would not be in place in other studies. Philosophers indeed are interested in nature, as well as scientists, but from a different point of view; they ask different questions about nature. The kind of question asked in science, and the kind of explanation expected, determine the method of science and hence to a large extent the ethos of scientists, so it will be worth while to glance briefly at the general notion of explanation used in science. (Perhaps it should be said in parenthesis that I am dealing with science, not with technics—with the understanding of nature, not with its use or adaptation to human purposes.) In what sense is anything explained by the theory of evolution, or the law that light travels in straight lines, or Newton's theory of gravitation, or the generalizations of anthropologists, or the hypotheses of Freud or Jung?

I

An event is considered to be explained, in the scientific sense, if it can be shown to be an instance of a *law*. Thus an eclipse can be explained as an instance of the law that light travels in straight lines. Lightning is explained as an instance of the law that a spark will pass in air if the voltage is high enough. The parabolic flight of an arrow is explained as an instance of the laws of mechanics and of the pull of the earth. The improvement in farm crops and animals by selective breeding is explained in so far as it exemplifies the laws of genetics. And so on. These laws are generalizations, derived from observation, stating the connections that have been found in nature—the factors that are always found together. A spark is always observed when the voltage becomes great enough, and never otherwise; the spark and the high voltage are related by the law that states that they are always found together. Such laws can often themselves be explained, in the sense that they can be grouped together under a *theory*, of which they are special cases; the theory constitutes a principle from which various laws

can be deduced. For instance, the theory of gravitation, that bodies attract one another according to a certain formula, explains in this sense not only the parabola described by the arrow, and the movement of falling bodies, but also the orbit of the moon round the earth, the orbits of the planets round the sun, the paths of comets, and the tides. In science, then, events are 'explained' if they are instances of known laws, and laws are explained in so far as they are deducible from theories.

These explanations are not of the type that we expect in history, or in law cases, or in human affairs generally. For instance, if we seek to explain the course of the French Revolution, we expect an account not only of the economic and geographical factors concerned, but also of what people did, and what their purposes were—what Robespierre did, what Danton did, and what they were aiming at. We want an explanation in terms of agents, acting responsibly as causes of their own acts, for the sake of ends consciously desired and rationally aimed at. So also in a case in law; the accused person is *prima facie* taken to be a responsible being, the source or agent of his actions, which are assumed to have been rational and so to have had some motive. In human affairs, then, we seek explanations in terms of agents and ends; or, to use the philosophical terms, of efficient and final causes.

These explanations are not used in science. They do not, however, conflict with the explanations of science; indeed, we can often give explanations of both types for the same event. If someone falls in a parabolic curve through the air after jumping from a window, the event may be explained both in terms of a rational action designed to effect escape from a fire, or in terms of the same mechanical laws that explained the flight of an arrow. If a train goes too fast round a bend and topples over, the disaster may be explained scientifically in terms of an exact law which relates the maximum safe speed to the radius of the curve, and this law is in turn explained as a consequence of the general theory of mechanics; but the tribunal that investigates the disaster will seek also an explanation in terms of the human agent responsible for the excessive speed, and of his motive. Explanations of the two types are perfectly compatible, because they answer different questions.

We can see now that scientific explanations can never supersede explanations in terms of God as Creator, nor *vice versa*. Whatever

explanation can be offered in terms of scientific law, there remains the question why there should be any law, any order in nature, or indeed why nature exists at all; and this question is answered only by the explanation that God created nature. Conversely, the knowledge that God created nature and its laws does not tell us what those laws are, and to discover them we have to turn to science. For instance, the biological theory that the present living inhabitants of the earth are not of the same type as the original inhabitants, but have evolved from them, is not in conflict with the belief that all things are created by God (whose action lies outside time and is as effective now as at the beginning of the universe); nor does the belief in creation imply any particular belief about the detailed course of nature. Much confusion can be saved if the different types of explanation are clearly distinguished and each of them properly applied to the relevant questions.

The scientist who is not already a Christian, however, is liable to be so impressed with explanations of the scientific kind, internal to nature, that he forgets the need for any cause other than nature, upholding it. In the pre-scientific period, he will say, the movements of the heavenly bodies were supposed to be regulated by divine power; but natural science now offers an alternative explanation of the movements of the stars and planets, in terms of the equations of physics expressing the dynamical properties of matter. Again, the living inhabitants of the earth were supposed to be specially created; but science now offers an alternative explanation of the present types of living creature, in terms of the hypothesis of evolution. We have seen that the two types of explanation—theistic and scientific—are perfectly compatible. But for most men, a successful explanation is the whole explanation; it does not occur to them that a thing may need explanation from more than one point of view. Scientific explanations therefore crowd out theistic explanations, and are apt to be a stumbling-block in the way of a scientist coming to believe in God as creator.

This is perhaps especially true in the field of anthropology and comparative religion. Many scientists take it for granted that any idea of a universally true religion must be given up, because the comparative study of religions has shown that the beliefs and practices of primitive religion are relative to the whole mode of life of the community; hunters, for instance, nomads and agriculturists have different religions corresponding to their special

needs. This is the conclusion reached when one considers the data of religious life from the point of view of correlation—the scientific point of view, that of the scientific anthropologist. But this is not the only question: there remains the question of the *validity* of these beliefs. This is a question of a different kind, beyond the reach of the correlating methods of science and beyond the concern of the anthropologist as such.

Thus the training of the scientist in rational thought is two-edged in relation to religion. The scientist derives, without doubt, from the practice of science a certain discipline of mind, an exclusion of irrelevant emotion, a dislike of empty rhetoric, a readiness to tackle abstract questions, a determination to use the evidence, all the evidence and only the evidence. He learns indeed the primacy of truth, and the absolute need of integrity. He learns to expect an ever-developing understanding. But on the other hand he learns to attend only to a special type of evidence and to look only for a special type of explanation. He is liable to conclude that, since neither the existence of God nor the truth of religion can be verified by the methods of science, neither of them is to be believed. The metaphysical argument for the existence of God is apt to leave him cold; in some versions which appear to appeal to science, he is quick to detect fallacies; and the genuine versions he finds hard to follow, because they need an understanding of causality in a sense not used in science, at least in physical science. Talk of substances and accidents, too, he regards with distaste, because these are not categories used in physical science.

The assent to revelation is also in some ways foreign to the scientific frame of mind. Revelation is a kind of knowledge believed on grounds quite different from scientific grounds. We do not give evidence that directly supports a revealed truth; we believe it on the authority of a reliable and competent witness—on divine authority, that of the Church and ultimately of Christ. When, for instance, we believe that we shall live after death, it is not because we have any evidence bearing directly on the question, but because God tells us so, through Christ and the Church. In this appeal to the authority of a witness, there is some analogy with the method of the historian, who must always make use of the testimony of witnesses, after weighing their reliability; but there is very little relation with the method of science. It is true that scientists have to make use of one another's results, but they

do so as a matter of convenience, not because any one scientist has an insight denied to others; in principle, any scientific phenomenon is accessible to any investigator. A scientist is usually very critical in his own field. He does not believe much in authority, certainly not in self-abandon to the action of another; and though respect is accorded to the theories of the great, they are not regarded as sacrosanct. Again, the attitude of a scientist towards nature is not one of humble docility; it is one of active and energetic questioning, cross-examination, and even third degree; Francis Bacon referred to the experimental method as 'putting nature to the question', which in his day meant the rack. Thus in science authority and submission are out of place. It should be said that Professor Coulson has recently suggested an analogy between a certain receptiveness and passivity of a scientist waiting for the inspiration that enables him to formulate a theory, and the receptiveness of the believing Christian. This seems to characterize the great scientific advances of genius, such as those of a Newton or an Einstein; but it is an open question whether it is part of the experience of the general run of scientists. Yet authority is characteristic of revelation. The soul is feminine to God, as Father Gerald Vann puts it. In science and revelation, the methods of knowing are different and the psychological approaches are different. Science is critical, questioning, and hypothetical; faith is confident, serene and settled. To a man trained solely in science, this must appear as a stumbling-block in approaching the Faith. It is not a real difficulty; the solution is simply that both modes of knowledge are valid, that authority and submission are necessary for one but not for the other.

There is another peculiarity of revelation, concerned with the evidence for the authority of the Revealer, the evidence on which we make our act of faith. How do we recognize the revealing authority as divine? No doubt the answer can be put in different ways; the answer I shall try to summarize is that of Canon Masure, given in a short but admirable work called *La grande route apologetique* (Paris, Beauchesne; 1937). This solution is that faith is the understanding of divine signs: that we recognize divinity by interpretation of the relevant data as signs pointing to their divine source. Such signs are the life of the Church, miracles, prophecies, and the character and life of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels. (These are identical with the traditional 'motives of

credibility'.) Confronted with one of these signs, we treat it not as a bare datum, something to be just catalogued or noticed for itself alone, but as a pointer to something else—to the divinity of Christ or the divine origin of the Church. We recognize the divine character by interpreting the relevant signs. The words and deeds of Christ are signs of his divinity: he is lovable, he is courageous, he speaks with authority, he commands nature, he claims to be God. The marks of the Church—one, holy, Catholic, apostolic—are signs that it is of divine origin and is the channel of divine grace. The theme can be expanded indefinitely in an apologetic; but the point here is simply methodological, concerned with the kind of argument used. The argument is to point to certain data, with an invitation to treat them as signs and to interpret them.

This is not a kind of argument for which a scientist will readily find analogies in science. If he is asked to believe a scientific law, the evidence he expects to be given is a set of observations which are instances of that law. If he is asked to believe a theory, the evidence he expects is a valid deduction from that theory of various laws which he believes on observational evidence. As a matter of fact, interpretation of a kind is involved both in passing from observations to laws and from laws to theory; but it is interpretation of a kind that often escapes the scientist's notice, and is sufficiently different from that used in faith to make the arguments for a scientific belief and for revelation seem different in kind. A hypothetical scientist who knew only scientific method might, I suppose, remain for ever unconvinced.

The Catholic scientist has therefore to make sure that he does not close his ears to sign-language. For this the common school of Christians is the Liturgy and the Bible, with poetry as a powerful aid and propaedeutic. Historically, it is interesting that it was those thinkers of the seventeenth-century who were more affected by science—Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes and Locke—who began the attack on metaphor and imagery, with which Shakespeare and the metaphysical poets worked their magic, in what Mr Cruttwell has called 'the Shakespearean moment'; and it was part of the Royal Society's programme to curb such 'excesses' of language and bring it as near to mathematical plainness as possible; thus science, along with puritanism, was one of the influences that made things so difficult for poetry in the eighteenth century.

Two important points arise here: one concerning the conversion of scientists, the other the development of cradle Catholics who became scientists. The first is that the stage of the argument that consists in recognizing divine signs cannot be avoided. One cannot reach faith by scientific or philosophical arguments. The scientist on his way to faith must at some stage learn to read the signs. Apologetic is useful only in so far as it helps him to do this. Indeed, he may not even become convinced of the existence of God before he sees the sign of Christ and so reaches belief in God and in revelation at the same time. The second point is that the young intellectual Catholic who is keen to find out the fundamentals of his faith may experience a lot of trouble if these different kinds of arguments are not explained to him, and if it is not made clear that faith can be reached at a bound without philosophical proofs of the existence of God, the nature of the soul and so on. He is liable to take an over-intellectual approach, supposing that cast-iron philosophical proofs are the necessary foundations of faith for any honest man, necessary links in a chain which cannot be stronger than its weakest link. The danger then is that, being used to scientific argument, he will not find the philosophical arguments convincing, and will think that his faith is in danger. It is very important that young Catholics should know that faith is not blind trust, nor 'believing where one cannot prove', but is intellectually respectable, a special kind of argument with its characteristic evidence and methodology.

Faith, moreover, is in a Person; it is not just assent to a set of propositions. This too may be something of an obstacle. Scientists are liable to be unperceptive about persons, because their main work deals with nature, not with people; they may be unpractised in thinking about people, and indeed may have never reflected on what a person is and what confidence in a person means. For this the only cure is to lead a wider life: to take seriously one's family and community, and to keep in touch with the fields of literature that deal with people most directly—history, biography, novels, and the poetry of love, both human and divine.

Faith, then, seems to call for a balanced human person, not obsessed with any single mode of thought. The danger of over-specialization in science is not that anti-religious principles can be deduced from science; they cannot. It is that a man whose mind has hardened so that it can only think in the scientific way

becomes unable to appreciate other ways of thought—the way that sees the world as dependent on God, and the way that sees God through the signs given by our Lord. Charles Darwin is the classic example; he confessed that his mind had become a machine for grinding generalizations out of masses of data, and that music and poetry which he had formerly loved had become wearisome to him; so that apart from science he could be interested only in second-rate novels. Evidently the shutters were closed against the supernatural. Blake's couplet, 'May God us keep From single vision and Newton's sleep', expresses this restriction of interest; we need 'the four-fold vision', of which Dr Sherwood Taylor has written in his book of that name.

Because of the different modes of thought and practical attitudes that a complete person needs, there are sure to be tensions in the life of a Catholic scientist, and these may be painfully felt by a scientist seeking faith. There is a tension between accepting authority in one sphere while insisting on direct evidence in another—even though each procedure is appropriate in its own field. There is a tension between relying on one's own activity and initiative in one way, and submitting to the action of God in another. And there is a tension between the desire for clarity in science and the necessity of mystery in religion, even though mysteries become luminous with meditation. But tension and polarity are to be expected, because they are essential to life, inasmuch as life has different aspects that have to be harmonized. Other tensions are equally essential—between action and contemplation, thought and sensation, convention and spontaneity. These tensions are not strains; they are perfectly healthy, like that of a muscle in the poised hand of an artist. They imply an equilibrium of forces—a balance of interests, a poised ability to use the mind in the appropriate way for a given problem, to put on the right thinking-cap. If one line of thought masters the rest and excludes them—if the mind drives steadily down the ruts of a single familiar track—the personality suffers. The scientist's fundamental danger, like the danger of other brain-workers, is obsession with one mode of thought. The solution lies outside science; it is to use the Scriptures, the liturgy and mental prayer; to keep the imagination sweet; and to keep in touch with the common life of mankind, in which the great realities of birth, growing up, love and death become part of one's being.

ADAPTATIONS IN FRANCE—III

J. M. DUBOIS, O.P.

Virginité

IF, in order to remain truly religious, any adaptation must leave untouched the essence of the vows of obedience, and of poverty, it is even more evident that it must not touch the essence of the vow of virginity. One day I was reading various passages from the Directory of the *ancelles* to a Benedictine nun. The paragraph concerning obedience began with these words. '*Fundamentally it is obedience which makes nuns of you.*' She exclaimed: 'Oh, no, indeed! If I am a nun it is before all because I am a consecrated virgin!' I think that as a matter of fact she was right. Of the three vows one can say that in substance virginity is, by all that it offers and expresses, the most characteristic of a religious consecration. Perhaps we shall come back to this. In any case it is clear that there can be no toning down in the practice of chastity. Consecration to God is an absolute.

However, in this sphere as with the others a certain adaptation is noteworthy. It lies either in the teaching of the vow of chastity or in the traditional ascetism organized with a view to its preservation.

As a matter of fact there is a considerable advance in adaptation as to virginity or chastity—now-a-days one can speak of them openly. I do not know whether it was the same in English congregations, but certainly in France one approached all such subjects with an exaggerated discretion. Not a few young nuns came to their profession or undertook charitable responsibilities, or educational ones, without having been enlightened about the mystery of love and life other than quite vaguely and veiled with false shame. You can easily understand that this ignorance and confusion caused many doubts and difficulties, and troubled many consciences.

It is interesting to notice that today a far better formation and information is provided as to these matters. Novice mistresses take on the task in their instructions and in private interviews

much more openly and straightforwardly than in the past. Subjects such as chastity, sexuality, life, the body, and even mere hygiene are approached quite frankly instead of with a terrified discretion. Novice mistresses and superiors themselves profit from courses and sessions to which theologians, psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors bring the fruits of their experience and their research. This is moreover occasioned by the atmosphere of a century unfortunately distinguished as an aphrodisiac century. The women who enter religious life are bathed in what one can hardly call a civilization, in a world of pictures, styles, literature; in an atmosphere where the realities of love and life are often nothing but sources of pleasure, eroticism, more or less crude or refined. Some arrive already tarnished by life, in their hearts, in their minds, even in their bodies. By a curious paradox this does not mean that they are more informed, more prepared than the others. What matters is that the novice mistress should explain things clearly and peaceably. This is even more necessary in the case of nuns whose apostolic work mingles them with a world where such conditions are rife.

There is thus in certain respects, a new factor. One talks about chastity. This a preliminary adaptation, necessitated by the spirit of the world in which we live and by the mentality of the younger generation who are soaked in it. It is interesting to note this. But what is far more interesting to observe is the evolution in the *way* of talking about it. A more immediately theological teaching takes the place of the moralizing content—is substituted for the more or less negative warnings and advice about chastity. It is thus from two points of view that the education of virginity becomes more realistic. It has developed simultaneously along two lines. On the one hand the frank direct information we have spoken of, and on the other the luminous and uplifted point of view of a theology of virginity. The attraction for poverty—often rather lyrical—whose existence we noticed in modern youth, is frequently accompanied by a veritable discovery of the consecration to God, with all that this implies in positive values, adoration, prayer, intimacy, tenderness towards the Lord. This sense of the absolute of God in the order of love corresponds with what abandonment meant in the order of earthly possessions.

It is moreover significant that Father Perrin, author of a recent remarkable book on Virginity, should be at the same time the

founder of *Caritas Christi*, a new secular institute. It is the same movement which inspired both the desire for a presence in the world, and also that of consecration to God; that is why one speaks more readily of virginity than of chastity, and why one sees in the virginal vocation the condition if not the substance itself of contemplative life. A virgin is one who does not look at her world, and is not interested to know whether any one looks at her. She is in the world without being of the world, not because of fear of evasion, but because of her desire to return as nearly as possible to the divine source. In such a spirit it is not enough merely to possess oneself. The essential is to keep oneself for God. Virginity thus not only includes moral protection, but also straight-way takes on a theological significance.

We have said that the adaptability of anything is in proportion with its vitality, with its attitude to reality. We must note here a real and profound adaptation with regard to everything concerning the vow of chastity, just as much from the lowly and realistic point of view of carnal things as from the higher level of the reality of God. As a matter of fact, this is not a real discovery but just a return after so many centuries of Cartesianism and Kantianism to Christian health—that of the great apostles, the great monks, the great monastic law-makers. They did not ignore evil indeed, nor the wounds of the flesh, less than we, doubtless, but they only spoke of the perils of the flesh in the light of the seduction of the love of God.

A whole series of detailed adaptations corresponds, in the ascetic order, by which one traditionally guarantees chastity, to this adaptation in religious education and formation. Some of them are at the very concrete level of physical and psychological life, others at the more religious level of observances.

Take first of all the adaptations of rhythm of life. Ten or twenty years ago certain points would have seemed absolute. In our days their modification is almost taken for granted. I mean all those questions of sleep, of rest, of time-table, of hygiene, etc. There is a host of examples—individual or general dispensations, modification of rhythm of life in order to diminish nervous tension, and establish physical equilibrium. This sort of adaptation is concerned with concessions to the mentality, habits and insufficiencies of the present generation. Women who enter religious life now have lived a more open, a more ventilated life. They have been girl

guides. They have been camping. They have travelled, and played games. Religious life can no longer ignore these habits which play a part now in all contemporary life. Thus in most French novitiates the sisters now do gymnastics. That may seem quite the normal thing in England. In France the effect was revolutionary. Furthermore, another strange paradox in the present generation, in spite of the openness and the freedom of the modern world, or perhaps even because of it, a great many candidates are more delicate, more nervous, less stable than those of the past. The rhythm of religious life must take account of this.

Here we must mention that ever more frequently recurring phenomenon of adaptation—psychiatric intervention in the discerning and orientation of difficult vocations, and more precisely of the psychiatrist in the treatment of difficulties over chastity. I know that T. S. Eliot in *The Cocktail Party* gives to his psychiatrist not only the priestly role of director of souls, but also the almost angelic lucidity of a master of destinies. I know also that there are great Catholic psychiatrists, and that at Rome there is a congress of psychoanalysis. Father Plé, whom I replace today, would be more qualified than I to tell you about this. It is quite possible that in certain cases the psychoanalyst is more useful and successful than the exorcist. It remains true, however, that psychoanalysis is severely handicapped by the materialism of its initiators and of those who theorize. Doubtless it is a technique, but it is difficult to purge it of the mystique in which it developed. This is not the place to discuss it, but it is important to have indicated this 'adaptation' in the education of chastity. It is possible, and even desirable, that progress in medical and psychological technique allow the collaboration of psychiatrist, spiritual director and novice mistress, on condition that the transcendence of the spirit is maintained. We should not too readily claim success in the order of adaptation. This question demands attentive reflection on the part of theologians, and a great deal of discernment on the part of novice mistresses.

However, the ascesis of chastity is not limited to psychological conditions, or even to physiological ones. There is more properly a religious aspect of the problem, that of the observances calculated to protect the virginal vocation. One notices here likewise some interesting adaptations. However, these do not arise, as do those of which we have been speaking, from concessions to the

mental atmosphere or the usage of new techniques. They are, rather, exacted by the apostolic vocation. We are about to rediscover the same inspiration which caused the changes of emphasis we noticed over obedience and poverty.

Monastic traditions safeguard the virginity of the heart and of life by means of a separation from the world. The elements of this separation can be reduced to solitude and enclosure. It is in this spirit for example that one asks of a nun neither to make nor to receive confidences. It is in the same spirit that all correspondence passes traditionally through the hands of the Superior. And it is for this reason that enclosure is a real shutting off from the world. In fact, taken literally these restrictions seem scarcely compatible with an apostolic vocation implying presence in the world.

This incompatibility is the greater and the more difficult to overcome in proportion as the elements are understood in a literalism which kills the spirit. This is, alas, often the case with old foundations. The history of the *ancelles* shows that it is slow and difficult to overcome this tendency. One of them recently told me about the difficulties her group had had in adapting the observance of enclosure to their apostolic life. 'In one of our hostels for young girls we had been asked to look on the kitchen as part of the enclosure, and to keep the next room as dining room for our guests. We dined at the same time as these people, but in the kitchen. At this meal we were to read a chapter of the Directory, followed by the traditional reading, we carried out the penances customary in other houses of Sion, eating our soup on our knees, kissing the floor, etc. All this was compatible with a traditional convent life. Over the washing up we had our recreation without even having the permission to associate with the people we received to meals. In face of the reality of our apostolic life our Superiors agreed to the suppression of "spatial" enclosure, and gave us permission to take our meals with the people who came in to dine.' This incident among many others shows that literal interpretation of enclosure in the sense in which it is normally understood made the lives of the *ancelles* impossible and paralysed their activity. Indeed, it is difficult to maintain together in the same life and in the same, often very limited, place, the requirements of enclosure and the necessities of a welcome. Now that things have evolved and the Directory of Sion has really been adapted to the life of the *ancelles*, the rule of enclosure remains but clothed in

another modality. In any case a separation exists, either of time or of place. Thus even in the tiniest residences there is always one room reserved for the sisters who want to work or to pray. Often there is tumult and excitement in the room where visitors are received, neophytes or the local people. But there is always somewhere in the house a place of enclosure and of silence. The spirit of enclosure is kept.

Sometimes this is not enough. It is for the *ancelles* themselves to discover the way in which to guarantee their solitude and their consecration. We shall see in a moment how they organize their silence. One might well apply to them a distinction which was made recently with reference to the priest workers, but which applies equally to any religious apostle. A priest is consecrated but not separated. Let us beware of too ready a criticism, for, quite precisely, 'consecrated' does mean 'separated'. Nevertheless one sees quite well what the distinction implies. Religious living in the world have to work this out in their lives. In not a few cases the situation formerly safeguarded by traditional enclosure seems endangered or compromised. Think for example of the problem of going out at night, necessitated by the rhythm of modern life. Think of the problem of elegance and of dress, that we have already met. This also has its bearing on the problem of chastity. The *ancelles* have to go to the hairdresser; they wear nylon stockings. In a great many details of daily life they are young girls like any others. They are consecrated to God, but they are not, because of this, cut off from the world; for there are whole realms where they must remain present in virtue of their vocation. In many cases this asks of them great courage and lucidity in order to distinguish the veritable will of God. And here again we come across the exigence we have already met with—such self-control can only be found in adult beings with a solid formation.

We must appeal to a similar maturity, both religious and human, in adapting the traditional rule concerning confidences and correspondence to the conditions of their professional and apostolic life. We mentioned this with regard to obedience. Certain *ancelles* are held to professional silence. They have to receive and keep serious confidences. Formerly one would doubtless have worried about their chastity—their virginity of heart. Now one trusts their seriousness and their maturity. This is equally true, and becomes more and more so, of all sisters in boarding schools,

hospitals, works of charity, whose jobs imply charge of souls.

Similarly there is less doubt about contacts. We are less obsessed nowadays over particular friendships, which does not mean however that they do not exist! Without hesitation collaboration is allowed between sisters, with all the confidences and sometimes even intimacy that this implies—an adaptation particularly remarkable at Sion where the Directory is most rigorous in the chapter on solitude.

All this is less concerned with broadening out than with maturity. Indeed, it would be illusory progress, in fact a wretched slackening, if this rule of confidence and liberty were not compensated, inspired, animated, vivified by a lofty interior exigence, born of a truly theological conception of virginity—consecration to God.

POINTS OF VIEW

The Mass and the Laity

To the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

I CAN sympathize with Denis Forbes on the Mass becoming so 'little' to us. As one who is in town all day, it is certainly hard to become 'detached' from the world, but may I give your contributor a little suggestion, I am assuming, of course, that he, like myself, goes 'up' and 'down'. If so, he should go into a Catholic church, say, in the lunch-hour for about fifteen minutes, and just 'give himself' to God. He need not strive to *say* anything, but he can kneel or sit in perfect silence, or perhaps mutter our Lord's name if he feels distracted. He should do this as regularly as possible. It is surprising what this simple little exercise can do. By this means, one *can* get into contact with our Lord daily; and, on the Sunday, Mass does not appear so hard an act on which to concentrate. In these changing, noisy days, the simpler our approach to the Divine Wisdom, the better. And *is* there any necessity to read newspapers up and down in the train? Why not a good book on theology?

N. Harrow.

AUGUSTINE, T.O.S.D.

Angelic Ministry

To the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

RECENTLY our newspapers were full of letterpress and pictures of a temple of Mithras and some of its statues discovered during building operations. Thousands flocked to see this evidence of the Roman occupation of England, and the suggestion was actually made that four hundred thousand pounds of public money should be expended in preserving these remains in their original site. But there has been another uncovering of things hidden, and in this land, too, which has excited no comment; indeed, so far as my reading goes it has not been mentioned at all in any Catholic publication. For long years all unacquainted with Hebrew have read in Daniel 10, 12 these words: 'And he said to me: Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, to afflict thyself in the sight of thy God, thy words

have been heard: and I am come for thy words.' But if we turn to the Knox version of the same verse this is what we read: 'Take heart, Daniel, said he; thy prayers did not go unheard. Prayer of thine it was beckoned me to thy side, from the very moment when thou didst set about thy search for knowledge, by fasting in the presence of God . . .'

Here we have a new and beautiful revelation of the angelic ministry, one allied to Raphael's words to Tobias: 'When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead . . . I offered thy prayers to the Lord.' We have all been familiar with St John's vision of the heavenly liturgy, and how the angels offer our prayers as incense in their censers; but Mgr Knox has presented the angelic co-operation in a new light: he shows how the act of prayer immediately sets up a union between the praying person and his angel. 'Prayer of thine it was beckoned me to thy side.' So, the one praying becomes a spiritual magnet attracting the presence of angelic help. This fact immediately draws our attention to those two incidents in the prayer-life of our Lord, the coming of the angels at the end of the Temptation, and the coming of the Angel to strengthen our Lord in his agony of prayer in the Garden; and we have the immense consolation of knowing that to us also, the members of Christ, come the angels to refresh and strengthen us. Surely this should make prayer all the more precious to us and deepen our sense of reverence as we pray. Then, too, our personal prayers become as those of the Mass, at which, as constant tradition tells us, the angels assist. To me, for one, this Knox translation is something far more thrilling and wonderful than the discovery of a hundred temples of Mithras! A pearl of great price has been unearthed, and how lovely it is! Gratitude is due to the discoverer. I wonder what further treasure may be found in his great translation! Nearly fifty years ago I was privileged to know a lady and her husband whose home in Derbyshire was the leading social centre of the district. Often parties and balls would keep her up late, but never once did this deeply spiritual woman ever rise late and shorten her morning prayers, for all through her married life she begged her guardian angel to awaken her at the usual hour, no matter how short her sleep, so that her prayer life might not suffer. 'Prayer of thine it was that beckoned me to thy side.'

Kiln Green.

ARTHUR VALENTIN

REVIEWS

HADewijch d'ANVERS: POÈMES DES BÉGUINES TRADUITS DU MOYEN-NÉERLANDAIS PAR FR. J.B.P. (Paris, Éditions du Seuil.)

This short work deserves to be known and studied by everyone who is concerned with any aspect of medieval spirituality. Its lucid and modest French versions of some of Hadewijch's splendid poems of divine love are in themselves excellent, for the author wisely began his task in the full realization of the impossibility of translating more of them than their mere sense, and he has furnished them with ample, recondite notes showing where the difficulties lie and where, sometimes, even the sense itself, delicately dependent upon nuances and ambiguities of language, is lost in any process of translation. To know Hadewijch for what she is, a singer of the love of God whose songs are not unworthy of comparison with those of Jacopone da Todi and Mechtild of Magdeburg, we must listen to her own words: and the pains which that may cost us she will repay again and again.

But the author of this work has added to its value by an introduction, written with the utmost clarity and simplicity, which none the less is informed by his wide and deep learning, and which points, sometimes in most disturbing fashion, to the conclusions which recent scholarship has indicated concerning Hadewijch and her age.

He is convinced that both 'Hadewijch I' and 'Hadewijch II'—for he separates the works which the late Middle Ages attributed all to one writer—were Béguines: and he starts with a summary of the modern literature upon the origins and growth of the Béguine movement, pointing out the many similarities, in development and in their literary products, between the Béguines and contemporary movements elsewhere, notably the Spiritual Franciscans and others in Italy. Deliberately using an ambiguous, dubious phrase, he writes of 'Liberty of the Spirit' as their outstanding characteristic: and he suggests that this liberty came to the early Béguines, uncloistered and vowed only to poverty, prayer and good works, as an unwanted gift which they would have exchanged for the strict discipline of the convents, had the religious orders been able or willing to contain them. From this he proceeds to show how it was the contemporary development of the vernacular as a serious literary medium which helped them to play their part in the spiritual revival of the thirteenth century, a revival which above all, he thinks, was marked by 'une conscience nouvelle de la solitude de l'âme avec Dieu, de sa noblesse divine, de sa liberté intangible'.

Plainly we are moving in the direction of Eckhart and Ruysbroek: but the author skilfully guides us off the comfortable, well-trodden paths, and across ground where we are liable to receive a few severe jolts. Reminding us briefly of Margaret Porete's condemnation and burning in Paris in 1310, and cursorily indicating his own opinion of these proceedings, he then summarizes the sensational findings which Signorina Guarnieri published in 1946 in the *Osservatore Romano*, that Margaret Porete's two 'heretical' propositions, which cost her her life (briefly and roughly, that the soul lost to itself in union with the Godhead need no longer be concerned with virtues, and that such a soul would find his consolations and gifts to be a hindrance to union with him), are to be found, word for word, in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. The French original of this text, hitherto only known in medieval Latin and English translations, has recently been identified in MS. 986 of the Musée Condé at Chantilly: and the author, who has Fr Stephanus Axters's support for his views, believes that in *The Mirror*, in the verses of Hadewijch II, which doctrinally resemble *The Mirror* closely, and in the earlier writings of Hadewijch I we have the most important texts which have survived to us from the early days of the Béguine movement.

There is next a most valuable short analysis of critical writings concerning *Brautmystik* and *Wesenmystic*, where the author reminds us of Rudolf Otto's demonstration of how impossible it is, in the works of Eckhart and Suso, to separate the one mode of thought from the other: and he then goes on to examine this in the light of the thesis, so generally neglected, of Professor Herbert Grundmann that the Eckhartian doctrine is not, as Fr Théry has suggested, merely theory run riot in the brains of theologians seduced by the allurements of dialectic, but rather an effort to synthesize and proclaim in forms acceptable to theologians the spiritual experience and practice of groups of devotees, notably women. However much Suso, Tauler and Ruysbroek may have learned from Eckhart, he had first learned much from the orthodox Swabian Béguines: and all who wish to judge Eckhart should ponder the author's well-argued contention that in the Hadewijch poems and in *The Mirror* (he does well to point out that this text was passed by three contemporary censors, copied and read by the English Carthusians in the fifteenth century, and given a *Nihil obstat* in 1927) we have pre-Eckhartian documents which should be considered as typical of the devotions and speculations which helped to form his thought. Not the least of the merits of this present work is the indications which it gives that in Eckhart's case there are today many scholars no longer satisfied to take the findings of his enemies on trust.

ERIC COLLEDGE

MEDIAEVAL MYSTICAL TRADITION AND ST JOHN OF THE CROSS. By a Benedictine of Stanbrook. (Burns Oates; 12s. 6d.)

It is a common criticism that the emphasis placed by the Church on positive law in her moral discipline, and on the sacraments in her system of worship is incompatible with the mystical or contemplative life of the spirit; in which it is maintained that the essence of religion consists. Without discussing whether such a view is compatible with orthodoxy (which I think is doubtful), it cannot be denied that there is about it more than a suggestion of spiritual snobbishness! One answer to such a critic would be to put into his hands this excellent essay, which shows the Doctor 'Mysticus' St John of the Cross as a true lineal descendant of the medieval tradition. This tradition he may be said to have completed, and to have surpassed by his genius as a practical psychologist and theologian. It is precisely because he is both psychologist and theologian that he is the most realistic and orderly of all writers on the spiritual life, but this order and realism represent a definite advance in man's moral and spiritual knowledge. It may be of interest to note one or two points which illustrate this. Up to the time of Hugh of St Victor the spiritual trials so common in the transition from discursive to contemplative prayer were regarded as punitive, and not as constructive in the soul's development. The progress initiated by Hugh of St Victor is taken up, and becomes decisive only when it is incorporated in the systematic doctrine of St John. In recent years much has been written on the subject of 'Acquired Contemplation', and of course St John's teaching on the Night of the Senses is classical, but the question had been raised as long ago as the time of Richard of St Victor, and here again we may see the unerring genius of the saint in discerning what is essential and fundamental in the traditions which he inherited. A final indication of the traditional roots of St John's teaching is the fact of which we are here reminded, that the three well-known tests for discerning if the time has come to pass from meditation to this prayer of 'simple regard' or 'loving attention' were taken from the Institutions of Tauler.

This book may be commended for the number and excellence of its quotations; they are the fruit of a genuine erudition.

R. VELARDE

THE BOOK OF PSALMS. Volume Two. LXXIII-CL. By Monsignor Edward Kissane, D.D., D.LITT. (Browne and Nolan; 30s.)

The lover of the psalms will find the second volume of Mgr Kissane's work no less a rich pasturage for every kind of information than the first volume. The translations are into a fine English, and the comments provide dates and other circumstances that go to draw a psalm from a

somewhat unreal world of indefinite piety to the reality of men living, feeling and praying in hardship or delight, the enlivening of Scripture which is demanded by a current mood one cannot but be thankful for. Mgr Kissane is however here cautious, which means conservative in speculation, while in textual criticism, a subject remote from the interest of the general reader, he commands admiration for the acumen with which he finds a plausible solution for tangled passages with the minimum of change in the Hebrew text. But for fifteen psalms he makes no change at all, and for twenty-five more, very few. It would be beyond the scope of this review to enter into detail on particular psalms, or to argue that the Septuagint might have been given greater credence. This generally reserved or traditional treatment might have been extended to the question of explicit prophecy of Christ, which is treated of too negatively to be committal one way or the other. At present, when the biblical world is in suspense over what discoveries will next upset or confirm long-cherished opinion, such prudence is not without its advantages.

SILVESTER HUMPHRIES, O.P.

L'ATTENTE DU MESSIE. Par P. Cerfaux, J. Coppens, R. de Langhe, V. de Leeuw, A. Deschamps, J. Gible, B, Rigaux. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

If the word 'Messias' is to be defined, it is by the term *Christus Incarnandus*, 'Christ due to be Incarnate'. Such was he to those who believed in his coming when the Old Testament was in force, albeit the word literally means 'the Anointed', which expresses one among several aspects of his work. Such was he to the Jews when he came, and in the terms moulded by the mode of prediction he was both received and commemorated in tradition and the books of the New Testament. In this wide area for dispute and doubt, criticism has had much to say, and the Church has its specialized refutations to present in defence of the deposit of Faith.

The latter task is the purpose of a collection of essays appearing from a group of professors, six Belgian, one Dutch, each dealing with his own topic in brief compass, to assess the present state of opinion in the light of *Divino afflante*; but there is something not altogether satisfying about the result. The individuality of treatment makes for an unconcerted whole, and the positions taken by non-Catholic critics are analysed and refuted according to the partial view of each working in his own sphere, stress being laid on some, others passed over; while the author's own position might seem to many to be itself 'critical'. The latter qualification, however, is perhaps the only attitude to take while archaeological discovery opens up ever newer possibilities, and a

guarded treatment prepares the way for an *a fortiori* argument should historical facts prove more than the minimum necessary for the defence in the natural order of the postulates of revelation.

SILVESTER HUMPHRIES, O.P.

THE LITANY OF LORETO. By Richard Klaver, O.S.C. (Herder; 28s.)

'A book about our Lady' can mean so many things, on a dust-jacket, in an advertisement, even in the mind of the author who sets out to write one. In this case we are left in no doubt. It is a 'Mariology'. Father Klaver says in the foreword that he has aimed at 'a more or less complete Mariology in a novel guise'. It is a presentation of doctrine commonly held, Thomistic, relying in some points on Scheeben and Garrigou-Lagrange. The form—an essay on each of the titles of the litany—preserves it from the stunning effect of a text-book, and the matter is, by and large, as good as a text-book.

Two things matter, then, about this book. Is there plenty of good solid doctrine about our Lady? Is it readable (will it do for spiritual reading)? The answer in both cases is a decided affirmative. The book is good for the mind and the soul and the heart. What more could we ask of a book about our Lady?

A criticism or two, in the light of this, should not dissuade anybody from reading it. The terminology, generally very good (it is exceptionally difficult to be both accurate and readable on some points of Marian doctrine), wavers on the question of mediation. At first glance one might think it implied more than one can claim for our Lady—i.e. for any creature. The cautionary phrases are there, but single phrases, out of the context, would lend themselves to misunderstanding. Fr Klaver does not seem to be *au courant* with the recent controversy about the death (or alternatively immediate passing to heaven without death) of our Lady.

There is no index—a defect in so solid a book; and very little bibliography. Perhaps a future edition will remedy this. If so, one would like to see some reference, for the history of the Litany, to the work done by the American Servite, Mr Jacobosky, about twenty years ago.

GERARD M. CORR, O.S.M.

THE MOUSE HUNTER. By Lucile Hasley. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Mrs Hasley is a gay and witty person, exuberantly American, fundamentally serious, in love with life and with her Faith, profound and yet uncomplicated. She was a Presbyterian who should have been a Catholic, and when she stumbled into the Catholic Church, it was without that soul-wrestling with which we are so familiar in conversion stories. In the same almost inevitable way she stumbled into

writing the essays, articles, and latterly even short stories that she has been writing ever since, about American life illumined by the Catholic Faith. She had no difficulty in finding a Catholic editor, she tells us, and we are not surprised; for she writes with refreshing zest, with a lightness of touch and a humorousness that is sometimes purely Thurber. She is no theologian, as indeed she is the first to admit—yet it seems she cannot go wrong.

Of the stories that make up the final selection of this book, the only one that can really claim to be called a 'short story' is the first—'I Remember Mama'—and that has a poignancy both startling and moving. There is the making of a story in the one entitled 'The Little Girls' that makes one wonder what Katherine Mansfield would have made of it. But for the rest, Mrs Hasley's stories are still almost essays; they haven't yet 'arrived'. They lack something of that incisiveness, that general vision, that mixture of the personal and the universal in looking at people, that heightening of a situation into a drama, that the short story requires.

They are nice little stories for the parish magazine, but so far that is all.

ERIKA FALLAUX

HEROIC TALES FROM MANY LANDS. By D. E. Burton. (Sands and Co.; 9s. 6d.)

These stories of saints and heroes through the ages will surely serve to give the Catholic boys and girls for whom they are written some sense of the universality of their Faith. The stories range from St Tarcisus, the boy martyr of the catacombs, who died to protect the Blessed Sacrament which he was carrying to the imprisoned Christians, to our present-day Group Captain Cheshire, V.C., the bomber ace and modern hero, whom horror of atomic warfare drove to caring for the sick and homeless, and thence to the Faith. History and even literature link up with the Faith in the story of the eleventh Century St Margaret of Scotland, who married Malcolm, son of that King Duncan who was murdered by Macbeth—and who, as Queen of Scotland, brought the Faith once again to that country. These and other stories are written simply, yet not too simply. Throughout one has the feeling that careful research has been made to ensure historical accuracy; and one is grateful for a very matter-of-fact manner of story-telling that is blessedly free from sentimentality and hero-worship. These saints and their Faith are left to speak for themselves, as well they can.

ERIKA FALLAUX

COLLINGRIDGE: A FRANCISCAN CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION. By J. B. Dockery. (Johns, Newport; 25s.)

In the standard histories of the years before Catholic Emancipation, for example those of Ward and Amherst, Bishop Collingridge does not find a front-rank place. The lion's share of the epic story has hitherto been stolen by Milner, the stormy petrel of the period. Even Douglas and Poynter, the statesmen of the Emancipation transaction, still await biographers. Fr Dockery's life of Collingridge, against that background, clearly demonstrates two things: that there is need for a book on *each* of the Vicars Apostolic and their coadjutors, and that no definitive history of 1829 can be written till all these gaps have been filled.

Collingridge is a tribute to a great and holy man, whose devoted work behind the scenes of English public life, albeit he was neither negotiator nor politician, does warrant the book's sub-title. For Peter Bernardine Collingridge was the mainstay of the Western District (i.e. all of West and South-West England, and the whole of Wales) from 1806, when he became coadjutor to Bishop Sharrock, till Baines succeeded him upon his death in the very year of Emancipation itself. And though Baines's extraordinary report to Rome on taking over would have relegated his predecessor to the status of an ineffective recluse, Catholicism in the West after the Gordon Riots owes more to Collingridge, as Father Dockery reveals, than to any other single person.

The method of the book has been, wisely, to let its hero speak for himself as much as is compatible with the writing of biography. Many biographers seem torn between a chronological and a topical arrangement of their chapters. Fr Dockery has ignored the apparent antithesis between the two techniques, by telling his story chronologically for the most part but holding up its climax in order to give us separate chapters on Collingridge's general administration of his District; on his relations (as Bishop) with the Franciscans who had formed him; on his relations with the other religious Orders, and particularly the houses of nuns teaching in his area; on his Pastorals, and on his private letters. This treatment allows the Bishop to emerge for the reader as a personality.

The incidental by-products are numerous and fascinating. We get a concise history of St Bonaventure's at Douay; a plan of the Embassy Chapels in London; a detailed description of the Church in Wales at the time, not readily available elsewhere; a realization that Collingridge was *not* anti-Jesuit; a reminder of how nearly Lingard came to being made a bishop; and we are left speculating whether the rift among the Vicars Apostolic might have been healed earlier if

ELECTED SILENCE, the autobiography of the world-famous Cistercian Thomas Merton, has not unexpectedly attained its sixth impression since it first appeared in 1949 in England. Burns and Oates have presented it in a smaller and handier format for 10s. 6d.

THE CONVENT AND THE WORLD, by Sister M. Lawrence, O.P. (Blackfriars; 9s. 6d.), is virtually also a reprint of a successful work, for it contains under one cover the three shorter works, *She Takes the Veil*, *Within the Walls*, and *They Live the Life* with which in correspondence style the authoress leads her reader into the cloister of a contemplative Order and very happily expounds the objective nature of the life of a nun behind a grille.

THE Anglican nun, 'A Religious of C.S.M.V.', who has done so much good work in translating St Bernard and other Fathers, has followed up her own original work on *The Coming of the Lord*, by one on the Church, *As in Adam* (Mowbray; 6s.). The Catholic reader may be amazed at the extent to which he finds himself in agreement with the authoress, and indeed the lessons he can learn from her. But this is one of the mysteries of divided Christendom.

FORMATION DOCTRINALE DES RELIGIEUSES (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars; n.p.) is the latest volume in the series *Problèmes de la Religieuse d'aujourd'hui*. The conference, the papers of which form this volume, was considering to what extent the modern nun can give herself to study, and in particular to the careful study of sacred doctrine. There is a problem here both for the active religious—especially the teaching religious—and the contemplative. The topic was discussed with regard to the problem and to its solution so far reached among French Congregations and finally what has yet to be achieved. The relevant parts of the volume are being translated into English as the subject is of the greatest importance also in English-speaking countries.



EXTRACTS

LA MAISON-DIEU published in its 40th number (Editions du Cerf; from Blackfriars Publications 4s. 5d. post free) the papers read at a conference held at Versailles last September. The theme was '*Evangelisation et Liturgie*' and the speakers were mostly concerned with the question of the 'assembly' (which we might call the 'congregation' had not the word too many unfortunate associations), and the preparation for a

truly liturgical assembly. Père Bouyer tackled the difficult question of what remains static and what changes in the liturgy. The liturgy is a movement which is apostolic and therefore thrusting out into the world; yet it remains centred on the permanent priestly action of our Lord. The balance between these two is not easy to maintain and for a long period after the sixteenth century the static element predominated, to give way in recent years to a great 'movement' of activity and adaptation which needs always to watch its connection with the central, unchanging priestly action.

Another essay in the same volume links closely with the articles in the present issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. Fr Vincent Ayel deals with the liturgy in its modern surroundings of 'technique mentality'. The *homo technicus* is only an abstraction; the professional man absorbed in his pursuit of effective, material techniques, is also a man with a special temperament, a member of a family, of a social class; and it is here that the liturgy takes its place. Yet the modern technicological civilization makes it increasingly difficult for the modern professional man to become assimilated to the ceremonies and public services and sacrifice of the Church because of his one-sided development. Fr Ayel considers in detail the danger of materialism, the cult of progress, rationalism and the supreme test of efficiency.

Whilst itself being adoration of the one God, proclamation of his divine transcendence, the liturgy uses concrete nature to the maximum; it is solidly anchored in the prime realities of space, time and their natural rhythms, material creation and its simplest elements. So in opposition to the technological *milieu* . . . the natural *milieu* brings man into direct and daily contact with these primitive elements of the cosmos—the passage of solar day, the night, the moons, the course of the stars, the seasons, rain, heat, rocks and wood. . . . In the technicological civilization all this seems to be passing more and more, the enforced reign of the artificial brings with it a break with concrete nature; the abstraction of time and measure loses contact with concrete material.

Yet the author suggests that we should not despair and that there are certain elements in the techniques of the day which are closer than we imagine to an authentic liturgical spirituality. He lists these points as the rejection of a de-incarnated spirituality, a taste for action, a sense of solidarity and of the universal. All these things are hopeful, and yet they need the 'myth', the sense of mystery to make them prime matter for the liturgy.